



# THE PENINSULA WRITER

## Constructive Critiques: The Good, the Bad & the Ridiculous

Literary Breakfast, 10 a.m. - noon, Saturday, January 20

“Do you have to do *everything* your friends tell you to do?” So goes the sarcastic question parents ask when kids contemplate following their friends’ ridiculous plans. Yet shouldn’t writers ask themselves that same



question when friends/critiquers offer ludicrous suggestions in the name of “helpful advice?” Writer Martha Engber will talk about whom to approach for feedback, how to interpret the critique and which suggestions will make our writing better rather than worse. She’ll also talk about how to maintain self-esteem during the critique process and how our ability to critique others’

work can improve our own writing. Lastly, she’ll cover various critiquing options – paid, online, small group — and how to start a critique group.

Martha Engber is the author of *Growing Great Characters From the Ground Up: A Thorough Primer for Writers of Fiction and Nonfiction* to be published this year by Central Avenue Press. She had a short story nominated for a Pushcart Prize as well as a full-length play produced in Hollywood. Her poetry and fiction have been published in Watchword, Anthology, Bookpress, the Berkeley Fiction Review, Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies, Massage Magazine and other literary journals. Now a professional editor, she started her own critique group twelve years ago.

**FEE:** Breakfast & speakers cost \$15 for CWC members and \$18 for nonmembers. Make checks payable to CWC and mail to: George Jansen, Reservations Chair, 2657 Warwick Place, Hayward, CA 94542. (You may also pay at the door.) **RSVP by Jan. 17 by calling (650) 615-8331.**

**LOCATION:** Hobee’s Restaurant, 1101 Shoreway Rd., Belmont  
**Board members will meet at 9 a.m.**

### CONTEST DEADLINE NEARING

Entries to the Jack London Writing Contest are due Jan. 20. **See P. 3**

### CWC OPEN MIKE NIGHT

Wed., Jan. 17  
7:30 p.m.

Twelve writers read for 10 minutes each, a great opportunity for authors to get exposure and practice public speaking skills.

For details, contact MC Jim Hanna at [jim@willwriteforfood.org](mailto:jim@willwriteforfood.org)

**Where:** Borders Books, San Mateo

## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

**Baby Steps**

Dear members,  
I don't believe in New Year's Resolutions.  
All they do is make you feel guilty by Feb-



ruary when you didn't keep up the new exercise regimen, diet or cleaning out the garage by the end of January. So what is the point?

I do believe in "baby steps" though, and these can be planned any time. I

think it is important to set goals one can exceed, rather than fail.

Since this is a writers club, our struggle is to stay seated long enough to at least write one sentence before something more important captures our attention, like doing laundry, checking E-mail, or cutting dead flowers off the Geranium.

Here is where we can establish baby steps and play a game at the same time.

I give myself an award if I play by the rules: Such as I will allow myself to check E-mail for ten minutes if I write for 30 minutes without interruption. I have a stop watch on my desk. I set it for 30 minutes, then I set it for ten.

The baby steps are such that I don't expect to do this more than three times a week and for not more than two hours. This is a schedule I can realistically keep and exceed. Like you, I have a full time job, family and other interests besides writing that

are important to me. Like you, I have a very full life with a lot of responsibilities. What is the point of beating yourself up over a writing schedule that you can't possibly meet?

So, may I make a suggestion if you are struggling to find time to write? Take baby steps.

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**GIVING YOUR WRITING  
CAREER A BOOST**

**Jan. 20, 12:30 – 1:30 p.m.**

Mentoring Co-Chairs Teresa LeYung Ryan and Joyce Robins will help 10 writers with their pitches. Whether you have a fiction or non-fiction book to pitch to an agent or an acquisition editor, bring 11 copies of your book description/synopsis (approximately 50 words, double-spaced) and together we'll help you hook the agent, acquisition editor, and anyone else who could be your future fan. This will help prepare you for the Jack London Writers Conference. Teresa will share her article "The Perfect Pitch" which has been featured on three occasions in Writer's Digest Magazine.

**Reservations:**

The group is open to 10 individuals with a passionate interest in writing. To register, email Teresa at [Info@LoveMadeOfHeart.com](mailto:Info@LoveMadeOfHeart.com). Be sure to put "January CWC Group Mentoring" in the subject line. Priority is given to members of the SF/Peninsula branch and members who didn't get to attend the December session. Non-members can attend one group mentoring session per year.

**Where:** Hobe's Restaurant, 1101 Shoreway Rd., Belmont (near Marine World Pkwy and Hwy 101)

**2007 JACK LONDON  
WRITERS CONFERENCE  
March 24, 2007**

The word going around town is that **Lemony Snicket's** is interested in keynoting at the Jack London Conference in March, but



he is known to be very shy - often sending his spokesman (**Daniel Handler**) to appear in his place. Either way, it's sure to be entertaining.

Other speakers that have confirmed so far include **Lolly Winston**, author of bestseller *Good Grief*; romance novelist **Candace Hern** (*One of Those Flings*); and screenwriter/novelist **James Dalessandro** (*1906: A Novel*).

Sixteen writing workshops are planned, including fiction writing, memoir writing, poetry, writing for children, writing dialogue, screenplay writing, humor, and much more.

The 17th Jack London Writers Conference will return to a familiar place: the Foster City Crowne Plaza, site of the 2004 event. Heading the organizing committee are co-chairs Tory Hartmann and Elliotte Mao. They are seeking additional help. If you would like to join the organizing committee, email Tory at: [toryhartmann@hotmail.com](mailto:toryhartmann@hotmail.com).

**JACK LONDON WRITING CONTEST  
OPEN TO CLUB MEMBERS  
Deadline: Jan. 20**

For the first time, the Jack London Conference writing contest will be open to branch members. Writers can enter in the following categories: Short Story, Nonfiction, Poetry and Novel.

Manuscripts must be unpublished and not accepted by any major publishing house at the time of entry. Only registered JLC attendees are eligible. Members of the CWC board of directors (SF/Peninsula branch), however, are not. That also goes for family members and pets of the judges.

More details are on the club web site at: [www.sfpeninsulawriters.com](http://www.sfpeninsulawriters.com).

**POET CLIVE MATSON TO  
OFFER WORKSHOP  
10 a.m. - 5 p.m., Sat., Jan. 6**

Anyone who's had the creativity beaten out of them at some point in our society's educational system - which may mean all of you - would do well to check out Oakland poet Clive Matson's creative writing workshops, held at CWC member Lian Gouw's house in San Mateo.

Based on the philosophy that there's always something to like in a piece of writing, Matson encourages his students to trust their own creative unconscious. He offers ten-week workshops - poetry, fiction, and nonfiction all welcomed - five session novel workshops, and daylong and two-to-three day retreats. Author of eight books of poetry and a writing tutorial called *Let the Crazy Child Write!*, Matson holds an MFA from Columbia and has taught at such diverse venues as the Bay Area So-

cialist School, Pacific Oaks College, The Writer's Center of Marin, and UC Berkeley Extension.

**Cost:** \$80.00

**For directions or more info**, call Lian at (650) 571-5429, or email Clive at [clive@matson-ford.com](mailto:clive@matson-ford.com)

**GETTING YOUR CREATIVE  
LIFE INTO SHAPE  
9 - 11:30 a.m., Jan. 27**

Will you be one of the 45% of those who make a New Year's Resolution? Will you promise to get in shape this year? What about the shape of your body of work? Now is the time to explore whatever dream you are passionate about. Get your Creative Life on the road to wellness by attending the New Year, New Creative You Workshop, sponsored by the Women's National Book Association - San Francisco Chapter.

**Where:** Half Moon Bay,

**Cost:** \$20 (WNBA-SF Members), \$25 non-members.

Mail your registration fee by Jan. 15 (note registration for the Jan. 27 event on your check) to: WNBA-SF Chapter, 2261 Market St #164, San Francisco, CA 94114.

For more information e-mail Mary at [maryeknippel@gmail.com](mailto:maryeknippel@gmail.com), or call 650-361-0344.

**PUBLISHED**

CWC member Pamela Reitman's story, "The Plaid Dress," was just published in the 2006 issue of The Griffin. It's about an Upper East Side matron with Alzheimer's who regrets the many years of estrangement from her now middle-aged daughter (an artist and a lesbian) and decides, despite her

faltering mind, to risk a trip to the Lower East Side in order to make amends. The story is a stand-alone excerpt from her just completed novel in which a woman loses her mind but finds her soul. The story is available online at [www.gmc.edu/i\\_services/pubs/thegriffin.html](http://www.gmc.edu/i_services/pubs/thegriffin.html).

**GOT NEWS?  
Deadlines**

If you hook up with an agent or publisher, or are doing a literary reading or workshop this fall, let us know. Deadline to submit to the Peninsula Writer for the January issue is **Friday, Jan. 19**. Send info. to [newsletter@sfpeninsulawriters.com](mailto:newsletter@sfpeninsulawriters.com). Put in subject heading: "Hey Kev! Got News 4 U."

**CWC- SF/PENINSULA BRANCH  
CLUB officers and committee chairs:**

President **Geri Spieler**

[Pres@sfpeninsulawriters.com](mailto:Pres@sfpeninsulawriters.com)

Vice President **Jane Booth**

[vp@sfpeninsulawriters.com](mailto:vp@sfpeninsulawriters.com)

Secretary **Mary Hanna**

[mary@willwriteforfood.com](mailto:mary@willwriteforfood.com)

Treasurer **Ann Foster**

[afoster500@yahoo.com](mailto:afoster500@yahoo.com)

Newsletter Editor **Kevin Ferguson**

[newsletter@sfpeninsulawriters.com](mailto:newsletter@sfpeninsulawriters.com)

Parliamentarian **Martin Dowd**

[parliamentarian@sfpeninsulawriters.com](mailto:parliamentarian@sfpeninsulawriters.com)

State Board Rep. **Margaret Davis**

[Margaret@rebn.net](mailto:Margaret@rebn.net)

Membership chair **Diane Warner**

[djdoodles@gmail.com](mailto:djdoodles@gmail.com)

Reservations Chair **George Jansen**

[gjansen@bcx.com](mailto:gjansen@bcx.com)